



CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON

# WORK LIFE BALANCE A

IN MALAYSIA

*Zaiton Hassan*





# **Contemporary Research on Work-life balance in Malaysia**



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Zaiton Hassan

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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# Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>Preface</b>  | ix  |
| <b>CHAPTER 1</b>  | 1   |
| <b>WORK FAMILY CONFLICT AS PREDICTOR OF EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF JOB CONTROL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AS MODERATORS</b>                               |     |
| <i>Raja Zirwatul Aida Raja Ibrahim</i>  |     |
|   | 47  |
| <b>CHAPTER 2</b>  |     |
| <b>ROLE OF JOB DEMANDS AND FAMILY–WORK CONFLICT IN PREDICTING JOB SATISFACTION AMONG MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES</b>  |     |
| <i>Yulita, Mohd. Awang Idris and Zaiton Hassan</i>  |     |
|   | 73  |
| <b>CHAPTER 3</b>  |     |
| <b>THE MODERATING ROLE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING IN EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGATIVE WORK-HOME INTERACTION (NWHI) AND INTENTION TO LEAVE AMONG MALAYSIAN EMPLOYEES</b> |     |
| <i>Azlinzuraini Ahmad</i>   |     |
|   | 107 |
| <b>CHAPTER 4</b>  |     |
| <b>ASSOCIATION BETWEEN WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND HEALTH BEHAVIOURS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW</b>  |     |
| <i>Madiah Mohd Shukri</i>   |     |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>CHAPTER 5</b>   | 129 |
| <b>WORK-FAMILY ENRICHMENT AMONG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A MALAYSIAN CASE</b>   |     |
| <i>Surena Sabil</i>  |     |
| <b>CHAPTER 6</b>   | 165 |
| <b>THE INFLUENCE OF DISPOSITIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS ON EMPLOYEE LOYALTY WITH THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF WORK-FAMILY FACILITATION</b> |     |
| <i>Noraani Mustapha</i>  |     |
| <b>CHAPTER 7</b>   | 205 |
| <b>EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE AND JOB-FAMILY SATISFACTION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY</b>            |     |
| <i>Adriel K.S., SIM</i>  |     |
| <b>CHAPTER 8</b>   | 251 |
| <b>WORK/FAMILY BALANCE AMONG NURSES IN MALAYSIA</b>  |     |
| <i>Wan Edura Wan Rashid</i>  |     |
| <b>CHAPTER 9</b>   | 303 |
| <b>MALAYSIAN WORK-LIFE BALANCE: EXAMINING ITS ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES</b>   |     |
| <i>Zaiton Hassan</i>   |     |
| <b>Biography</b>   | 337 |
| <b>Index</b>   | 341 |



## PREFACE

Prophet Mohamad SAW once said “The best of you are those who are best to their wives.” and “The best of you are those who are best to their families.” Lee Iacocca, ex-Chrysler CEO once said, “No matter what you’ve done for yourself or for humanity, if you can’t look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?” The quotes emphasize the importance and significance of family in our life.

However, in today’s globalised world with work dominating most people’s life, the challenge to balance between work and life, particularly work and family obligation is getting harder. Although the advancement of technology, assist in increasing the organization productivity to a certain extent, it also contribute to increasing the blurring between work and family. As Malaysia aspires to be a developed country by year 2020 and a high income nation by 2030, long working hours are becoming the norm. Expedia’s 2012 Vacation Deprivation Survey reported that Malaysians workers had been categorized as world’s fourth most dedicated workforce. Regus International reported almost half of the workers in Malaysia work well over eight hours a day and regularly take work home to finish in the evening. They also found 32 per cent of Malaysian workers and 38 per cent of global workers usually work between nine to 11 hours every day, while 15 per cent of workers in Malaysia regularly work more than 11 hours a day, compared to 10 per cent globally.

Thus it is high time this book is published. The main purpose is to create awareness about work-life balance (WLB) issues faced by Malaysian employees in different industries. The book highlights the importance of WLB issues in Malaysian organizations, so that policy makers can formulate suitable strategies to ensure employees’ well-being. In addition, the book also documents the progress and changes in research focus in WLB studies in Malaysia since the last book by Prof .Noraini Noor – Roles and Women’s Well-Being: Some Preliminary Findings From Malaysia in 2002 and a book by Prof. Aminah Ahmad, the Interface of Work and Family Roles: A Quest for Balanced Lives in 2005.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first four chapters discuss how work-family conflict (negative interaction between work and family) influences

organizational and personal outcomes such as job satisfaction, intention to leave and health consequences. The next two chapters examines positive interaction between work and family i.e. work-family enrichment or facilitation among women. Chapter 5 looks at contributing factors of work-family enrichment among professional women and the chapter 6 examines how work-family facilitation mediates the relationship between organizational factors and employees loyalty among single mothers. The last three chapters examine both conflict and enrichment. Chapter 7 looks at outcomes of conflict and enrichment; i.e. satisfaction and how religiosity moderates these relationships among hotel employees. Chapter 8 discusses outcomes of conflict, enrichment and work-family balance on satisfaction among nurses. Last but not least, Chapter 9 looks at both antecedents and outcomes of conflict and enrichment and proposed a Malaysian work-life balance model.

Most of these studies are used cross sectional quantitative design, with one study using longitudinal design. One study utilizes qualitative design i.e. literature search. Some studies use women (professional, single mothers, nurse) as the sample while other studies focus on all employees. One study uses population sampling. Most quantitative studies are analyzed using current statistical analysis i.e. structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS in data analysis. Some tested mediator and moderator.

The book is written for human resources managers, policy makers, researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students as a reference and guidelines. The book is authored by ten Malaysian academicians in public and private universities who examined work-life balance issues during their doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree. Publications resultants from the thesis are listed at the end of each chapter for further information. Correspondence address and current research interest of each author is also provided.

It is hoped that this book can instill the understanding that each employee has other roles in his or her life besides being a worker in an organization. It is very important for managers to understand the juggling of multiple roles so that well being of employee is maintained without jeopardizing organizations' productivity.

Zaiton Hassan

## **CHAPTER 1**

# **WORK FAMILY CONFLICT AS PREDICTOR OF EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF JOB CONTROL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AS MODERATORS**

Raja Zirwatul Aida Raja Ibrahim

### **Introduction**

With the emergence of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), researchers have begun to pay more attention to work-related wellbeing (Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007). Danna and Griffin (1999) argue that wellbeing should be viewed as an individuals' satisfaction with various aspects of work such as satisfaction with job, co-workers and other job-related aspects. An individual's wellbeing can also be determined by satisfaction with life domains such as family and spirituality and health such as psychological and physical health.

Guided by the Job Demand-Control (JDC) (Karasek, 1979) and Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) (Johnson & Hall, 1988; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) models, the present study investigates work family conflict as a significant predictor of wellbeing among Malaysian workers. In addition, the present study investigates the moderating role of job resources (job control and social support) in buffering the negative impact of work family conflict on employee wellbeing.

Work family conflict is defined as a form of inter-role conflict which occurs when an individual has to face incompatible role pressures from work and family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985 p. 77). There are two types of work family conflict which differ according to the direction of conflict: work interfering with family (WIF) conflict, and family interfering with work (FIW). Noor (2004) defines WIF conflict as occurring when work-related activities interfere with family responsibilities including when an employee tries to complete his/her office tasks at home, during time in which he/she should be with their family. FIW conflict occurs in the opposite direction, such as when an employee needs to cancel a meeting due to child illness, thus disturbing the smooth execution of work demands.

Nonetheless, it is common to see other terms used to explain the two types of work family conflict in the work family literature. The interchangeable terms often used by scholars include work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC) (e.g. Lingard & Francis, 2006; Rantanen, Pulkkinen & Kinnunen, 2005), work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (Kinnunen, Vermulst, Gerris & Makikangas, 2003), work home conflict (Emslie, Hunt & Macintyre, 2004) and work-family spill over and family-work spill over (Franché et al., 2006). From this pool of interchangeable terms, the terms chosen for the current study are work to family conflict (WFC) to illustrate work interfering with family and family to work conflict (FWC) to illustrate family interfering with work. WFC and FWC are widely used in the work family literature, and are more direct and explicitly show the direction of conflicts.

The forms of work family conflict are: time, strain and behaviour-based (Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) strain-based conflict occurs whenever the strain caused by one role influences the performance of another role, time-based conflict occurs when time devoted to one role inhibits the participation in another role, and behaviour-based conflict occurs whenever behavioural patterns that are incompatible with expectations are accepted. The present study focuses on the bidirectional conflict between WFC and FWC, assessing



Assoc Prof Dr Zaiton Hassan received her PhD in Organizational Psychology from University of South Australia, Adelaide. Her research *Work-Life Balance among Malaysian Employees* had been selected for inclusion in the overall compendium of activities for the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Plan of Action 2008-2012. She has published more than 20 papers (journal, book chapter and proceeding) in the area of work life balance. Currently she is a lecturer at Department of Human Resource Development, Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

In today's globalised world with work dominating most people's life, the challenge to balance between work and life is getting harder. The book is written for human resources managers, policy makers, researchers, postgraduate and undergraduate students as a reference and guidelines as well as to create awareness about work-life balance (WLB) issues faced by Malaysian employees in different industries. In particular, the book discusses the factors contributing to work life balance and outcomes of work life balance to individual employees as well as to organizations. Most importantly, the book highlights the implication of work life balance (WLB) issues in Malaysian organizations, so that policy makers can formulate suitable strategies to ensure employees' well-being while maintaining organizations' productivity.

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